Promoting the inclusion of education personnel with disabilities through social dialogue in education

According to Article 27 of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UN CRPD), State Parties must "recognize the right of persons with disabilities to work, on an equal basis with others; this includes the right to the opportunity to gain a living by work freely chosen or accepted in a labour market and work environment that is open, inclusive and accessible to persons with disabilities" (United Nations, 2006).

Disability employment in Europe :

Equality of opportunity in employment is often measured through **the disability employment gap** – the difference between the employment rate of people with disabilities and that of people without disabilities.

In 2024, the disability employment gap across the EU27 was 24%*

Inclusive employment for all :

Inclusive education cannot occur without the inclusion of education personnel with disabilities. Teachers with disabilities can make **a unique contribution** to inclusive pedagogies, equality and anti-discrimination. However, disability representation in the education workforce remains low, and education personnel with disabilities face **significant barriers to professional entry and career progression** (Neca et al., 2022).

Barriers to disability-inclusive employment in education :

Pre-service teachers

- Exclusionary admissions procedures
- Inadequate support in higher education institutions
- Fear of negative consequences associated with disability disclosure
- Low rates of disclosure, resulting in reduced access to accommodations during teacher education
- Negative attitudes from peers and faculty
- Teacher standards that reinforce narrow, ableist definitions of 'the competent teacher'
- Reluctance among school leaders to hire teachers with disabilities

In-service teachers

- Limited accessibility and insufficient resources in the workplace
- Negative attitudes and perceptions of competence among colleagues
- Fear of negative consequences associated with disability disclosure
- Low rates of disclosure, resulting in reduced access to accommodations in the workplace
- Institutional and personal barriers to accessing formal and informal leadership roles
- Limited access to professional development opportunities
- Limited availability of disability-related data

* Eurostat. (2025). Disability employment gap by level of activity limitation and sex (source EU-SILC)

This factsheet has been developed in the framework of the project "InclEdu4AllNeeds", co-funded by the EU.

“Nothing about us without us”:

Policy recommendations for disability-inclusive employment :

1. Develop inclusive teacher policies with education social partners, actively including disabled voices, to guarantee that education systems reflect the full diversity of human experience.

2. Ensure that recruitment and employment policies in the education sector are designed, implemented and monitored in line with the UN CRPD (United Nations, 2006), with clear accountability mechanisms.

3. Invest in disability equality and anti-discrimination training for education personnel to prevent discrimination and promote inclusive workplaces.

4. Collect disability data on education personnel in compliance with national data protection legislation and use it to monitor employment practices to ensure equal opportunities and reasonable accommodations.

5. Support disability-awareness and knowledge exchange by establishing and actively engaging in networks, forums and events where disabled persons’ organisations can lead and shape discussions.

6. Invest in the physical and digital learning environment to ensure that new educational institutions are inclusive by design and that existing institutions are fully accessible to all employees.

7. Ensure that educational workplaces receive adequate funding to invest in resources to support the full inclusion of education personnel with disabilities, including access to all necessary physical, digital and technological accommodations.

8. Ensure the meaningful participation of disabled people in all social dialogue mechanisms at school, local, regional and national levels.

9. Embed and monitor disability rights in social dialogue mechanisms to ensure they inform policies and agreements.

10. Support the training and capacity building of social partners on disability rights, inclusive employment policies and broader intersectional issues of diversity, equity and inclusion in the workplace.

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Build an inclusive teaching workforce that reflects the diversity of the communities it serves, particularly in terms of ethnicity, language, culture, gender, disability and social background. This involves tackling the stereotypes and often invisible barriers that prevent certain groups from considering a career in teaching.

(Santiago Consensus, UNESCO, 2025, p.7)

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